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ABSTRACT

The program outlined in this document suggests that all secondary school students have continuous composing experiences in four major areas of written discourse: sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository. This document contains a chart detailing a plan of instruction in written composition for grades 7 through 12, sample composing experiences (records of actual lessons) and student responses, evaluation materials, and position statements by the Los Angeles City Schools and the National Council of Teachers of English. Sample lesson topics are: character description--writing from a model; description--journal observation; chronological-logical sequence; point of view; friendly notes and postcard form; business letter and correct envelope form; expository paragraph on literature; editorial writing; essay to persuade; essay based on Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette"; and defining a nonsense word. (JM)

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COMPOSE YOURSELF

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A Plan for Instruction in Written Composition Grades 7 - 12

LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS
Instructional Planning Division
Publication No. SC-741 1976

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FOREWORD

Skill in written communication is a basic need in today's world. Despite the proliferation of electronic and other communication media, writing skill is essential to success in post high school training, advancement in business and the professions, participation in civic and social situations, and growth in personal expression and self-esteem. "Compose yourself" is more than a catchy slogan. The development of skill in writing continues to be a major responsibility of the schools and the individual.

Recent reports on the national decline in writing performance of students prompted the Instructional Planning Division to call a districtwide composition advisory committee meeting in the Spring semester 1975. The committee included teachers, advisers, and principals representative of the twelve administrative areas and various levels of instruction, K-12, as well as Education Commission members. The committee was asked to suggest the kinds of instructional materials that would provide guidelines for use by areas and local schools in their development of an articulated composition program. Among the recommendations of the secondary school subgroup of the committee were the following: (1) That a revision be done of the composition charts and guidelines for junior and senior high school (1963, 1961), incorporating current research findings and classroom practices related to rhetorical principles and the composing process; and (2) that new instructional aids for teaching and evaluating composition be prepared. The present publication is an effort to meet some of the needs expressed in these recommendations.

The instructional plan and support materials represent the initial stage of what is intended to be an evolving program for written composition, one in which individual teachers and students will participate in the development of additional materials. To each one, the invitation is extended: Compose Yourself!

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Margaret Card, Department Chair, Hollenbeck Junior High School, Area G
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Marjorie Kassorla, Teacher, Millikan Junior High School, Area I
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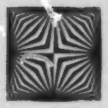


NOTES ON A PLAN FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Purpose

The chart contained in this publication represents another look at the broad spectrum of writing that underlies the universe of discourse. In attempting to encapsulate the entire range of composing experiences, the committee recognized the danger of oversimplifying a complex process. Weighed against the alternative of a lengthy publication citing scholarly research and successful teaching practices, the economy and greater readability of a brief overview seemed preferable.

The aim of any comprehensive program in composition is to provide students with instruction that will develop to the maximum their individual language skills in real communication situations: personal, social, vocational, and academic. The program outlined here avoids long lists of objectives (often obvious) and strict sequences of activities (often arbitrary) in favor of a skeletal plan that may be fleshed out according to local school-community needs.

The program suggests that all secondary school students should have continuous composing experiences in four major domains of written discourse, with instruction and assignments adjusted to the performance competency level of individuals within the classroom. It notes the need for pre-writing experiences using language to express thought and emotion and for direct teaching of composing skills related to a specific communication problem. The program further emphasizes development of an awareness of intended purpose and audience and a conscious choice of appropriate language. Finally, it provides a concise resource for local schools and individual teachers to initiate their own sequences, adapted to specific pupil needs and to individual teaching styles and preferences.

Writing Domains

The major domains of written discourse identify four somewhat exclusive fields of composing. Each field or domain requires the exercise of specialized skills in organizing and transcribing the writer's experience into various modes that fall within the domain. The division into four domains further isolates for the teacher's attention several kinds of written products, or modes of writing, typical of development in that field.

The lists of written products are deliberately limited; they are intended only to suggest the range of appropriate composing experiences for students at various performance competency levels. A brief description of the four domains follows.

> Sensory/descriptive writing makes use of language to record accurately and vividly impressions gained primarily through the senses. This writing domain includes various forms ranging in complexity from simple lists of words and phrases to extended discourse in paragraphs and poems. Although abstract ideas may underlie its intent in more sophisticated efforts, sensory/descriptive writing draws its data from concrete details and makes its statement from the power of observation to recreate through the senses the quality of an experience.
>
> Imaginative/narrative writing draws on the resources of language to organize events or actions involving characters, objects, and settings into some meaningful time sequence. The raw materials for this domain of composing may be drawn from personal or vicarious experience, but they are ordered and embellished to express an individual interpretation of the characters, objects, places, and events. A sense of movement, subjective response, and inner reality govern much imaginative/narrative writing.
>
> Practical/informative writing uses language for utilitarian or survival purposes. Although vividness and emotional tone may be employed to enhance practical/informative writing, its primary purpose is to record events, directions, and ideas in simple, clear, concise language, addressed to a particular reader and intended to bring about a desired response.
>
> Analytical/expository writing employs language to analyze and/or to explain a character, a process, an idea, or a conviction by a logical, and often psychologically effective, arrangement of details, examples, reasons, or arguments. Because it attempts to clarify the substance of ideas, this domain of composing demands precise, accurate diction and a more formal organizational pattern, including a clear thesis statement, paragraphs developed by topic, and materials arranged for the reader to understand how the writer's conclusions were reached.

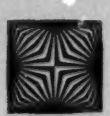
Experienced teachers will immediately recognize from the above descriptions and examples on the accompanying chart that skills associated with one domain frequently "bleed" into other domains. Close observation of concrete detail and the vivid language of sensory experience are used in narrative and analytical/expository writing. A sense of movement and chronological sequence contribute to the development of some sensory/descriptive, practical/informative, and analytical/expository writing. Practice in particular modes of one domain, then, can increase skill and be applied to composing problems in other domains.

Performance Competency Levels

All students should have some composing experiences in each of the four domains of written discourse. In the past, composition programs have often been planned on the assumption that all students enter secondary school performing at the same level of competency; they are expected to acquire the same new skills and to refine others as they move through a set number of objective-based learning experiences by grade level. Not all students, however, can be expected to perform at the same level of competency in writing. Just as individuals of the same age and schooling vary in their ability to carry a tune or manipulate a tool, so, too, do persons differ in their ability to recreate observations and ideas through written discourse.

The present instructional plan assumes that the teacher can assess a student's level of writing competency and can then provide appropriate composing experiences to develop and improve each individual's performance in particular writing domains. Under this plan, some junior high school students will progress to higher competency levels in several writing domains by the ninth grade; others will need many experiences at level I. Similarly, some senior high school students will reach level V in all domains by the twelfth grade; others will need much continued practice to compose successfully at lower levels.

The program charted here acknowledges individual stages of growth in writing skill within each domain by grouping the representative composing tasks that a student might be able to perform with some degree of competency at a particular stage of development, starting with the very simple and essential forms or modes appropriate for adolescents at Level I and moving to the more complex and specialized modes of Level V. Performance competency levels are related to individual growth in composing ideas, not to arbitrary expectations by grade level. As such, the performance competency levels in the program chart are intended as guideposts for schools in mapping a comprehensive composition program and for teachers in planning appropriate writing experiences or in differentiating individual assignments.

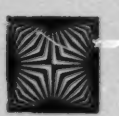


Needed Pre-Writing Experiences

Although the process of composing begins with having something to say, the ideas are communicated through controlled language. Often, before students are asked to record their impressions and feelings in a particular mode, the teacher should provide the class with related reading and oral activities that focus on and extend practice with the uses of language in shaping thought. Whenever possible, such activities should not be isolated lessons, but should grow out of previous reading and other shared experiences, and should move into some form of written expression. By example, as well as precept, students should be helped to see interrelationships among the language arts.

Needed Composing Skills

The need to communicate is universal among humans; the desire to communicate through writing must be nurtured. The student with nothing to say has no desire to reveal a paucity of ideas or to acknowledge a need for skill development. The teacher must provide not only the experiences but the time for students to acquire new ideas, to reflect upon personal impressions, to imagine alternative responses to events, to discuss and exchange language, thought, and feeling with others, and to decide what they wish to say -- to whom, in which "voice," and for what purpose. To develop students' sense of structure, the teacher is responsible for providing direct and systematic help in formulating thesis and topic sentences, in selecting supporting material, and in arranging ideas, facts, or details for the most effective development of the topic. A writing assignment may be preceded by the teaching of a new skill -- such as a new pattern of paragraph development, a new method of sentence combining, or a problem in choice of language -- and/or the review of previously taught skills related to the assignment. If compositions are to be revised and recopied for a final evaluation, class time should be given to a laboratory situation in which good student writing is recognized, unsuccessful student writing is analyzed, and difficult problems of diction and structure that appear in the compositions are solved together as an oral experience. Attention to process at each stage of composing will produce a better product.



Grammar and Composition

A separate category for grammar is not included in the composition chart because the study of language pervades the entire plan. Language study -- including grammar -- is an integral part of every activity involving spoken or written communication. Consequently, under "Needed Composing Skills" we have indicated that an essential skill is the selection of appropriate language (level, diction, word choice, sentence structure) for the purpose and audience of a given communicative act. Each teacher can determine for each class -- and ideally, for each student -- what skill-building activities are most appropriate. Being able to name parts of speech, diagram a sentence, or recite the definition of a compound-complex sentence will not make students better writers. But understanding what grammar is and learning about the make-up of a language in general will give the students insight as to how language works and how they can make language work for them as human communicators.

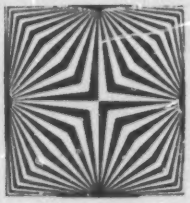
It is essential that students learn how to increase their fluency in using the language. Doing sentence expansion and embedding exercises, employing a variety of dialects, studying the structure and etymology of words, working with the basic syntactical structures (active-passive, statement-questions, etc.) -- these are among the many kinds of activities students will benefit from under the tutelage of an instructor who can analyze their strengths and weaknesses and design language experiences that will improve their language performance.

COMPOSING EXPERIENCES	PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY LEVEL I	PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY LEVEL II
NEEDED PRE-WRITING EXPERIENCES PRACTICE WITH --	.Oral discourse in domains noted below .Inference making .Sensory words .Connotations .Chronological and logical sequence .Analysis of simply organized paragraphs .Distinguishing fact from opinion .Awareness of metaphor .Word play .Identification of audience and purpose	.Oral discourse in domains noted below .Use of metaphor and imagery in own writing .Word association: neutral, favorable, unfavorable .Generalization from an experience .Adaptation of specific point of view: assuming a role or voice .Awareness of audience .Honesty and truthfulness in expression, especially about self
EEDED COMPOSING SKILLS PRACTICE WITH --	.Formulation of interesting opening sentences, topic sentences .Identification and use of supporting example or detail .Selection of engaging title .Letter forms .Selection of appropriate language	.Formulation of topic sentence with clearly stated key words .Enumeration of details that relate to key words in topic sentence .Arrangement of events in narrative: movement, time order .Transitions within paragraphs (level, word choice, diction,
FOUR DOMAINS OF WRITTEN DISCOURSE:) SENSORY/DESCRIPTIVE	.Journal entries (personal: writer as audience) .Observation notes on physical scene: sight .Simple forms of unrhymed poetry; limericks	.Journals (expand audience) .Observation notes on physical scene: sight, sound, smell, touch (using metaphor to make reader experience the observation as something new) .Advertising copy: appeal to senses .Character sketches
2) IMAGINATIVE/NARRATIVE	.Anecdotes, original folktales, myths .Dialogues: fictional characters; real life people .Imaginative diary entries of fictional characters .Humorous captions to cartoons, pictures	.Short short stories .Fictional letters .Dialogues to make a specific point (e.g., the generation gap) .Script writing .Dramatic monologues .Humorous capsule stories (reconstructing the story implied in a cartoon)
3) PRACTICAL/INFORMATIVE	.Friendly notes and letters: acceptance of invitation, acknowledgment of gift, postcard message .Lists: steps in a process to make or do something .Written directions .Simple notes taken from a class textbook	.Friendly notes and letters: social responses, record of phone messages .Notes on class oral activities .Self-evaluative statements at end of units .Media commercials .Job applications and business forms .News reports .Consumer complaint letters .Requests for information
4) ANALYTICAL/EXPOSITORY	.Single paragraph .Development of a given topic sentence on both personal and literary experience .Dialogues to persuade	.Single paragraph to two-paragraph compositions: 1. observation-interpretation from concrete source (picture, political cartoon, etc.) 2. persuasion by reasons 3. editorial and/or letter to editor for school paper

IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION
7-12

PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY LEVEL III	PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY LEVEL IV	PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY LEVEL V
.Oral discourse in domains noted below .Examining the extended metaphor in professional writing .Transcription of oral usage (dialogue, discussions) to EAE (Edited American English) .Control of information through subordination and coordination .Interview techniques (questioning) .Expanded awareness of audience and purpose	.Oral discourse in domains noted below .Compression and expansion of ideas and supporting details	.Oral discourse in domains noted below
.Formulation of topic or thesis sentence that calls for development of ideas .Organization of details by differing possible patterns (most to least important, most to least apparent, far to near, etc.) tone, sentence structure, etc.) for purpose, audience, point of view	.Use of combination of ways to develop an idea or paragraph .Transitions between paragraphs .Clarification and refinement of thesis statement	.Refining the skills acquired at earlier levels
.Journals (expanded audience) .Paragraphs of extended metaphor (clarifying an experience for an audience, repetition of key words) .Paragraphs of personal observation on senses and feelings that adopt varying "personae"	.Journals (expanded audience, more formal entries) .Personal response to complex stimuli (quotations, pictures that make statements or reorient perceptions, contemporary art, etc.) .Poems of observation	.Journals (entries for self-exploration and for literary purpose)

.Short stories with a clearly implied theme or point .Autobigraphical sketches - memory writing .Narratives to discover one's own voice: anecdotes, accounts of personal experience, interpretation of another's experience as memoir .Writing in ballad form .Retelling/inventing a humorous event .Interior monologues	.Narrative paragraph illustrating conflict effectively .Paragraph combining subjective and objective material (fact and feeling) .Vignettes that emphasize mood or symbol .Dramatic and interior monologues	.Interior monologues based on modes from literature (conscious use for an audience beyond self) .Biographical and autobigraphical narrative used as a tool (to persuade, convince, etc.) .Narratives employing irony, allegory, paradox, satire
.Objective account of an experience .Summaries: committee work, class discussion .Applications: job, driver's license, credit .Business letters: job, application, consumer complaint, order, request for information .Directions with map	.Precis writing .Applications: job, college .Business letters: job, college, asking for a recommendation for college or job .Test taking: essay response .Resumes .Scientific abstracts	.Notes on formal lectures .Replication of report writing for such occupations as police officer, insurance adjuster, salesperson, survey writer .Precis and abstracts: review .Applications and business letters: review
.One, two, or three paragraph compositions: 1. description-conclusion 2. narration-conclusion 3. analysis-conclusion 4. analysis-persuasion 5. editorial and/or letters to editor for community paper (solution to local problem) 6. Short reviews and reports	.Multi-paragraph themes: 1. analyzing: a statement embodying a common concept, an abstract idea, cause and effect, interrelationships, single character 2. defending, questioning: values, opinions 3. editorializing for a national audience 4. short paper based on library sources	.Multi-paragraph themes: 1. extended definition: defining and classifying 2. analyzing a problem 3. reaching a judgment using logic and evidence 4. defending a judgment 5. argument for a literary interpretation 6. library paper (research)



SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCES AND STUDENT RESPONSES

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCES AND STUDENT RESPONSES

The teacher lesson plans and student writing samples are presented with the hope that they will be useful to the composition teacher in a variety of ways:

- -As illustrations of composing experiences in the domains of writing at different competency levels on the composition chart
- -As samples of student responses to given assignments
- -As models for spotlighting areas of strengths and weaknesses in student writing
- -As examples of marking and evaluating practices
- -As a springboard for department discussions and individual planning of appropriate teaching strategies

The teacher lesson plans include background information which explains the purpose and the structure of the writing assignment and establishes the criteria by which the student performance is to be judged. Student samples show the actual marks and comments made by the teacher in a real classroom situation. In many cases, an explanatory comment indicating what strengths and weaknesses the teacher finds in the student's writing completes the lesson-to-evaluation sequence.

The sample composing experiences are records of actual lessons submitted by committee members and other teachers in different areas of the district. They are included as indicators of the diversity of approaches used to promote student competency in a particular writing domain. The domains and levels represented by the lessons concentrate on areas least emphasized in other composition publications; e.g., sensory observation at the upper levels, dramatic monologue as narration, postcards as friendly-informative messages, exposition at the middle levels of development. It is worth noting that many of the lessons grow out of reading and language experiences.

The student samples are duplicated intact with all their warts and wrinkles, focusing not on the ideal but on a concrete representation of what actually results from a given assignment. Most of the papers illustrate the range of acceptable performance within a competency level; however, they do <u>not</u> all represent good or superior performance.

Teacher evaluations of each student sample are included to illustrate kinds of comments and criteria for correction that are employed in different situations. Specific letter grades are purposely avoided because the intent of the chart and the accompanying lessons is not to dictate a grading scheme but to provide stimulus for thinking in terms of performance competencies. Individual schools or clusters of schools will want to establish local criteria for evaluating student writing to fit the needs and competency levels of their own student bodies. Suggestions for such criteria are included in the section on Evaluation Materials.

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

DESCRIPTION - JOURNAL OBSERVATION

Procedure: Teacher resource--Invention: A Course in Pre-Writing and Composition, by Michael Paull & Jack Kligerman.

Practice Exercise: Do a quick, ten-minute, on-the-spot observation exercise outside the classroom; ask students to take notebooks outdoors and observe one square inch of ground, jotting down all the things they see in that limited space, including notations about smells, sounds, tactile experiences, textures, shapes, shadows, and light. After ten minutes of close study, bring a list into classroom and write an on-the-spot paragraph of description. The approach may be either subjective or objective.

Writing Assignment: You are to record your perceptions of a busy city street, intersection, shopping mall, or other location in which you can find a lot of activity, groups of people, and interesting objects of varied shapes and kinds.

A. After school, walk by yourself several blocks down a busy commercial street in an area you are familiar with (or a shopping mall, amphitheater area, etc.).

B. In the process, write down 25 observations which you think characterize this location. These can be either sentences or phrases, but each should be no longer than a sentence.

C. Write the observations at the scene, as they come to you, not from memory. Write down whatever concrete details strike you as important. You might pay some attention to such features as line, shape, and color.

D. Bring your numbered observations to class as an entry in your journal. Think about the following questions before you do the observation; then apply these questions again before you begin the writing exercise that will follow as an in-class assignment:

1. What picture of the street do you get? Is it beautiful or ugly? Does it make you happy or sad, pleased, angry, annoyed, etc.? Does it contain moving objects or objects at rest?

2. Do the observations seem to focus on certain things and not on others, e.g., people, sounds, actions?

3. Can you distinguish this street from others you have experienced? Does it seem to have a personality of its own?

4. Do you get a sense of the movement involved in the observation? Do you have the feeling of moving through the scene or of standing still in it?

5. Do the recorded observations convey an attitude about the street? What is that attitude?

6. Does the street convey a single main impression? Can you describe that impression in one word?

7. After you have compared your set of impressions with others in this class, can you find any basis for comparisons? Do you like some better than others? Why?

8. In what way could each set of observations be seen as a "meditation"?

9. Look at the following sets of observations. Try to determine why one is better than the other:

Set A

a. bank
b. supermarket
c. cleaners
d. Chicken Delight
e. bar
f. taxicab driver
g. traffic light
h. city tree
i. overfilled trash can

Set B

a. Chevy Impala with smashed sides
b. fallen, dry, colorless leaves
c. a girl yelling "Mario"
d. twenty-three big filled trash cans
e. student climbing over fence
f. two drunks in front of library

10. Then write a descriptive essay based upon the observed details and the way you have expanded and organized them.

Level IV
Sensory/Descriptive
High School Student 1

DESCRIPTION

JOURNAL OBSERVATION

How can sunbeams "overwhelm"? Seems like a contradiction of terms – but I do understand what you mean

Walking down the deserted Santa Monica beach, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of total emptiness. Seagulls circling slowly overhead expressed my thoughts with their plaintive cry. The air hung gray and heavy with mist over the wet, rain-drenched sand. At the horizon the gray of the sky faded into the stormy gray water. Their color matched my mood.). Nicely done!

Everywhere I felt the pressure of the surrounding emptiness. The pier, hanging over the water, was practically deserted. Most of the shops were closed with the cold weather, shuttered tight against the rain. Even the merry-go-round stood boarded up. The loneliness of the beach was especially accented by the wet, sagging volley ball nets, deserted by the summer crowds.

sp. Ah! nice

The only person I saw on the pier was a weathered old man silently fishing. My senses were touched by the smell of fish and wet boards as I realized not everything was affected by the changing seasons. Surfers in wetsuits still battle the waves despite the cold and rain. The fishing boats sitting not far off shore fought against the rocks they're tied to, anxious to be on their way again. A lone jogger headed down the beach undaunted by the weather. The waves continue to crash against the pilings with solemn regularity. I was awed by their talent for stability in the changing seasons.

sp

Very good imagery here – technically, however, you're switching verb tenses.

Looking at the beach in an entirely new light, I found things that were hidden to me before. There were children digging for sandcrabs in the wet sticky sand, and more playing on the wet swings. A few bicyclists pedaled along the boardwalk. A young couple walked arm in arm down the shore. Music drifted through the air as the merry-go-round started. Then slowly the sun peeped through a hole in the clouds, bathing the sand in its golden light.

TEACHER'S COMMENT: I liked this description, even though my English teacher mentality had to spot the errors and rough spots. There is excellent imagery here, indicating that you have a keen eye and can feel a scene.

Level IV
Sensory/Descriptive
High School Student 2

DESCRIPTION

JOURNAL OBSERVATION

I found myself inside Topanga Plaza on a rainy afternoon. The dominant impression recieved in the store centered around people's personalities. This is simple because people in general are a hidden laugh with many characteristics. By the wayside off in the distance to be easily seen is the place commonly known as background. I never truly understood things or places though I've tried a thousand times. Topanga Plaza is a great place with many attractions.

Time, we discovered, had no essence on entering the Plaza. We seemed to enjoy some nice eye contact but way down inside we knew she was just vegetating. Funny yet in no wise did she seem less attractive leaning against a steel pole. After this we sat at a table close to the snack bar where to my surprise walked the man of my dreams with another fat cigar. King Crimson days won't extinguish themselves with fat men strolling around plaza's like this one. (Just like the common man, wearing a cracker box smile when he's being watched.) Behind the snack bar counter held a exciting girl in a red dress. She opened my eyes and gathered all my attention at the price of her looks. Then the entire world stopped only for me in my amusement on seeing Eric Clapton. He had boots on? No, this is not Eric Clapton, the one people called God. His impersonator being quite earnest yet to shallow when he walked. He reminded me of a chicken and I detested it.

People stood out everywhere at the Plaza. This is obviously a place of people. The surrounding excited themselves with changing bright colors. Above the red and yellow floors were brown lacquered benches. Directly behind these benches held a sign and a mean looking door with two windows. The sign said "exit employees only." Two giant floors held all the idle objects.

by whom? reference?

Wording sounds oddly strained h

You had a companion? The first I just mentions "I."

fragment

This is too "in" me to follow. Must be privat language?

what held her?

?

?

?

the chicken? Eric? the reminder? Tr to be more specif in using pronou

Again I think you misuse the term "he

(While inside the story windows mannequins stood lifeless wearing fine clothing.) Ties for men hung inside picture frames outside a small pantagon shop no larger than an American bedroom. Its height reached only 18 feet into the sky though the architecture brought some happiness. Lighting took the shadows from things that can only bestow and withhold shapes, maybe even colors.

TEACHER'S COMMENT: You have some extremely interesting images in your description. I have some difficulty understanding what you mean by them, however, since you use language in what I suspect is a very private way. If you're going to communicate with a reader, you need to choose images and language which the reader and you can share. Otherwise, the reader will just be puzzled.

Perhaps part of the problem is in knowing how to construct several different kinds of sentences to convey your imagery. We'll practice that.

Level IV
Sensory/Descriptive

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION - WRITING FROM A MODEL

Procedure: This assignment is derived in part from a similar one in Connolly's A Rhetoric Casebook, adapted to suit the class level. The exercise is last in a series of shorter exercises and analyses of character description in literature. The models from literature provide the basis for pre-writing discussion, specifically an understanding of these concepts in composition:

1. Voice (narrator's voice as distinguished from author's);
2. Tone;
3. Dominant impression;
4. Point of view (position of the narrator in relation to that which he is describing);
5. Subjective/objective approach to description;
6. Organization of details logically, spatially, or chronologically.

Materials: Literary examples of character description from:

1. Ethan Frome, by Edith Wharton
2. Quite Early One Morning, by Dylan Thomas
3. "The Dead," by James Joyce
4. Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother, by John Terry
5. The Return of the Native, by Thomas Hardy

Writing Assignment: Write a character sketch of 200-250 words that reveals a person's inner traits through a description of his or her physical features.

Before you write the sketch:

1. Choose a real or imaginary person suitable for description. A very young or old person, or someone you know very well, makes a good subject.
2. Prepare a list of physical characteristics and a parallel list of character traits.
3. Decide what dominant impression you wish to create. Choose language that will help create that dominant impression when you write.
4. Use the model paragraphs, especially that of Eustacia Vye by Thomas Hardy, as guides to your own writing.

Level IV
Sensory/Descriptive
High School Student I

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

WRITING FROM A MODEL

It is not easy to write about someone you have lived with for thirteen years. You accept her shortcomings and love her for the warmth and spontaneity she brings into the house and into your life. And yet you never really think of her physical make-up and its relation to her whole personality.

Dana is my sister. She is tall and well-built, with a pale, almost white complexion that is soft to the touch, like a delicate gardenia. Her long, light brown and somewhat curly hair always seems to take on a special luster when it enters the sun's rays.

Nice! does hair enter the sun's rays? - odd

Her tiny nose presents her greatest problem. It makes it almost impossible to keep her glasses on comfortably. They always seem to slide forward to the tip of her nose, and she looks like a little "granny" looking over her spectacles. And yet, the eyes that these glasses tend to cover are friendly, interesting, and gleaming.

It is her mouth that can prove to be her greatest asset or her worst enemy. Her frankness and outspokeness, at times, make her incomparable, one of a kind. Her lack of thought or perhaps her lack of propriety can make her blurt out things without thinking. She can be like a computer that gives out facts without feeling.

good ✓ - the match between physical feature and personality is clear and appropriate

However, her insight into a problem can sometimes be surprising. Her solutions to complexing situations tend to compensate for her thoughtless behavior. Perhaps this is typical of a young girl entering her teens in this hectic world of ours.

physical feature?

But surely her smile and the laughter and joy she brings to our household make her a needed and loved member of our family. She is lucky to be with us and we are just as lucky to have her.

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Good--the physical features convey personality adequately without your having to tell us they do too insistently. Well-organized

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS, SAMPLE #1

Given the purpose of the assignment -- to create a dominant impression about a character by revealing that person's inner traits through a description of physical characteristics -- this student writer has done an above average job. The central paragraphs focus on specific physical features (skin, hair, nose, eyes, mouth), revealing Dana's delicacy, beauty, friendliness, and individuality. The fifth paragraph fails to focus on a physical feature, thus breaking the pattern established in the preceding ones; however, it is not a "filler" paragraph, for it makes a statement about the girl's complexity and shows her in relation to the larger class of teenage girls. In turn, it tells the reader something about the writer's own personality. In addition, the whole essay is logically organized and makes sound use of the models the writer studied before writing this description.

The writing is not distinguished by any stylistic excellence, but it is readable, standard, edited English. The student could benefit from a rewrite exercise if the instructor worked with her on several points.

1. Consistent point of view through consistent use of pronoun: I, you, or one. I would recommend in this piece the use of I, for it is a personal and directly-observed account of "my sister." Who is "you" in paragraph 1?

2. Careful examination of the tone created in each paragraph. Paragraph 4 is muddled because of infelicitous expressions: "her lack of thought," "her mouth that can prove to be her greatest asset," "gives out facts without feeling." It's clear what the writer wants to convey in this paragraph, but the wording is misleading.

3. Better placement of modifiers. In paragraph 2, for instance, is the skin or the touch that is like a gardenia? And why does "tall and well-built" belong in the same sentence with "pale, almost white complexion?" The student writer should be led to examine why and how facts and images are juxtaposed throughout the essay.

Level IV
Sensory/Descriptive
High School Student 2

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

WRITING FROM A MODEL

He was a man to defeat all description. He was the embodiment of all that is old. Yet there was a quality, something more, that caught one's attention.

He was neither short nor tall, but his body was gnarled and etched like the bark of an old tree. He was not fat, nor certainly was he thin, but the twisted leaness of his frame exuded a delicate strength, like the buffeted form of a tall standing reed.

His coloring must once have been half-way between dark and fair but time, in adding to his greyness had neutralized it completely, fadeing him slowly with an air of gentleness to the beloved likeness of an old tintype.

His hair was thining now to a faded grey but in his youth his leonine hair had given him the only claim to distinction he would ever have.

It was his face, though, that arrested my attention. Between the lines of suffering and laughter one could read the trial life had etched, but he radiated an inner glow as though he had passed through the fire of living and had been purged and forged to a rapier strength.

His soft eagle eyes, set deep in his steadfast head would listen to your very soul. Compassionate and quick to fill with pain for your hurt he was willing to give all, to support you. But no fool, he was alert to the hypocrit and unkind. Many a time I remember being held spell-bound to his gaze, feeling uncomfortably like my heart was being barred to his knowing gaze.

His mouth came from the Renaisance exquisetly molded, gentley strong but with a quiet courage that one feels they could trust with their life. It was the same with his hands. Many people have placed their lives in the strength of his strong supple hands, young though covered with parchment skin, with

why the fragments?

long, graceful, sensitive fingers. Saved from girlishness by the quick power they demonstrated. Even in his old age.

It has been said that fate has dealt with him cruelly. He sp. was not born with ~~a~~ the physique of Hercules, though he has passed through Hades, nor was he born with the looks of Apollo. He should have been a veritable giant, but I think in his way he was. For within his chest beat a brave and true heart that has served his friends faithfully and kindly.

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Good -- I'm happy to see you trying to deal with metaphor and allusions -- shows you're both willing to experiment and learning something about writing. The strength of your essay lies in your ability to reveal something of the inner man through his outward appearance. Your figures of speech don't always work well, and you frequently get carried away (all that bark, trees, and reeds in paragraph 2, for instance); but in general you have written effective description. I can "see" this man, and I believe I can "know" him as well.

Some problems to work on:

1) mixed metaphors
2) use of semicolon in compound sentence structures
3) sentence fragments
4) pronoun agreement
5) wrong words
6) spelling

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS, SAMPLE #2

This student has executed the assignment well and should be commended for reaching and extending herself by experimenting with images, allusions, and metaphorical language. The product suffers from a bad case of purple prose and an insensitive instructor could have a field day writing derisive comments in the margins. But the purpose of the assignment was to show students how they might use language to reveal human personality. The framework (revealing inner traits through a description of outward physical features) established the organization of the paper and provided a means of focusing what might otherwise become a collage of impressions. Sample 2 is organized, focuses on physical features, shows a sense of point of view, tone, and dominant impression, and (if one ignores the errors) comes across as a clear picture of the old man.

The instructor could help this writer revise and improve the essay by working with her in these areas:

1. Avoid mixed metaphors and establish appropriateness in metaphorical language. "Etch" doesn't go with "gnarled" and "bark," and "exude" doesn't work with "delicate strength" or "buffeted form." The man might have had a "leonine" head in his youth, but "leonine hair"? "Soft eagle eyes" seems odd to this reader; the eyes certainly can't "listen" to my "soul," and so on.

2. Avoid following the model descriptions so slavishly. The seventh and eighth paragraphs, particularly, are attempts to pattern after the Eustacia Vye passage but the writer isn't able to handle the material easily. Thus, the references to Hercules and Apollo seem unnecessary and a bit ridiculous, and the statement that the mouth is necessarily Renaissance is not convincing nor adequately explained. However, the objective here is not to discourage the young writer and inhibit her/him, but to show how the references and allusions might be drawn from more appropriate sources or used more naturally.

3. Clean up some skills problems. These include pronoun agreement, sentence fragments, wrong words, spelling errors, and the use of semicolon.

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

CHRONOLOGICAL-LOGICAL SEQUENCE

Dispatch Activity: Write three words on the board for students to define:

robbery
burglary
vandalism

Preliminary Writing Assignment: Over the weekend, the school safe was broken into and money was taken. Food and supplies were also taken from the cafeteria. There was one witness. You have an opportunity to address five questions in writing to this witness. Arrange your questions in a logical sequence and be able to defend that questioning order.

Discuss differences among three words: robbery, burglary, and vandalism. (The class had difficulty distinguishing these, and could not see the point of discussion at times. Only when sentencing charges were brought in did class awaken to the point of definition assignment.)

Sample student questions sequence:

1. What time did you see them come?
2. Where were you standing?
3. What are there (sic) descriptions?
4. What did you do during the robbery?
5. What time did they leave?

1. What time did the incident occur?
2. Can you describe what went on?
3. Did you actually see the assailants?
4. How many were they?
5. Can you give me a description of the assailant(s)?

1. When did the vandalism happend (sic)?
2. Where were you at the time it happend?
3. Can you or able you (sic) to see the setting of the crime?
4. Who did you see that time?
5. Do you know any one of them? Are you sure?

Although there was no right sequence, we concluded that asking questions pertaining to the time at which the burglary occurred or descriptions of the burglars would be most logical in this situation.

Read aloud to class: "The Pocketbook Game," by Alice Childress.

Discussion questions:

How many characters in the story?
Who is the narrator?
What happened?

Has this ever happened to you?
What was your reaction?
What seem to be Mildred's feelings?

Writing Assignment: Extend the dramatic monologue (discuss term in context) to fit accurately the way Mildred would talk and feel, act, or react, either in another situation or in an extension of this one.

Level II
Imaginative/Narrative
Junior High School Students

RESPONSE #1

Marge? You there? OK. Well, after that moment on, I was stared at like a scarecrow in a cornfield. She even looked at me as I walked down the hall. What? No, I haven't gotten a raise. It's a shame at that. When I left, I says, "Bye Mrs. E." In a sweet tone ... and she says I should come back next week at around 2:00 pm. My ears couldn't believe what I heard. That old lady doesn't have a kind bone in her body and yet ... What? Yea! She asked me back. Sure, it's a surprise ... No way, I'm not askin' that girl for a raise ... Yea, I hear ye, child ... Yea, I know she's strange, but it's all in a days; work.

TEACHER'S COMMENT, RESPONSE #1

You accomplished the task--and very well--of extending a believable voice in monologue. You showed that you understood "The Pocketbook Game" by inserting your own scene. Note the class's reaction to your monologue when you read it aloud to them. "Gee, sounds just like the author's writing." Congratulations! Watch spelling, especially "ie" and "ei" combinations, as well as apostrophes for contractions.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS, RESPONSE #1

This student has an unusually good ear for dialogue/monologue and can replicate it with seeming ease. Again, the authenticity of the voice was remarkable, even when attempting to sketch a very different set of characters and setting. I would give this student a better-than-average grade and work toward shaping the language, both in mechanics and in singularity of purpose.

Level II
Imaginative/Narrative
Junior High School Students

RESPONSE #2

? So them I told Mrs. E I didnt need her money so right there I told her I was going to quit, but then I reconsidered because I do need what money I can get. So I got back to my cleaning and sp tucked away in Mrs. E's closet I found an old jewerly box. So sp curious as I was, I opened the box to find it jamed with rings, sp bracelets, and necklaces. I was temporaly shocked to see all that jewerly but I later went on about my business without removing a single piece of jewerly from the box. Then when I was about to leave Mrs. E said, "Very good," and I said What, what do you mean? She said, "I was wrong. I should trust you. sp From now on becase you didn't remove anything from the jewrly box." She had set that bos there as a trap to see if I would really steal.

Punctuate as a direct quotation

How can you correct this sentence fragment?

TEACHER'S COMMENT, RESPONSE #2

Good imaginative extension of the story. By introducing the jewelry (please note spelling) box trap, you not only added a new dimension to the monologue, but you demonstrated that you grasped the essential character traits of Mrs. E. and Mildred. Please correct the spelling and punctuation on your paper.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS, RESPONSE #2

Again I would rate this imaginative narrative above average, in spite of the mechanical errors, because of the jewelry box scene that was a logical extension of Alice Childress's monologue. Although the style is not as rounded in voice and feel as the original dialogue, the monologue does convey adequately Mildred's attitude, her awareness, and her reactions--all in keeping with the character. I would underline all misspelled words and have the student look them up.

RESPONSE #3

Shes Nice! is not to pppr becase s ed eating suppe iss her own house. She's probaly a maid.

TEACHER'S COMMENT, RESPONSE #3

Please see me. I think that you have had difficulty in understanding both the story and the writing assignment.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS, RESPONSE #3

The student missed the point on several levels. There were other students who missed the point of the story but could manage to write within the frame of a monologue and maintain some semblance of "voice." This student accomplished neither, feeling the necessity to make overall summary comments instead on Mildred's occupation, character traits, and socio-economic status. I would reread the story with this student and then reassign the writing, explaining monologue again and "extending the story."

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

POINT OF VIEW

Procedure: This assignment is designed to show how, in a piece of narrative writing, the nature of a story is strongly influenced by the narrator's point of view.

First day: Help the students understand how a person may have one point of view in one instance, and another at a different time, and how this influences his/her perception of an event.

1. Through discussion, establish a working definition of the term point of view.

2. Explore role-playing. Create a student-teacher dialogue, in which the teacher (playing the role of parent) reprimands a student (playing the part of a son or daughter) for coming home three hours late. Ask the participant how s/he feels during the role-playing.

   Reverse the role of the parent and child by involving a second student who repeats the dialogue with the first student: i.e., the first student is now the parent, and the new student is the child. Discuss with participants and class how each student felt during both dialogues.

   Ask students to read a myth from a text. (In this case, we read "Pygmalion" in Man the Mythmaker, W. T. Jewkes, Ed., Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, p. 192) Through discussion, we decide who the narrator was (omniscient) and who the three characters were. (Pygmalion, Athena, the statue) Ask how the story might have been different if each of the three characters had told it. Students must be able to see the limiting aspect of a first-person narrative. They must learn to think their way into another person's perceptions, and try to imagine what his or her response might be.

Second day: Have the class view a pair of film strips that reinforce the concept of point of view.

1. Show cassette film-strips Nos. 3 and 4 from the kit, "Writing from Imagination to Expression," by Guidance Associates. These strips deal with the problem of point of view. There are places in each of the two strips in which to stop the strip and the tape player and carry on student-teacher activities for brief periods. These are both verbal and written activities. The last strip ends with a retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood" as it might have been told by the mother, the grandmother, and the wolf. In each case, the student is asked to discuss the reason why each character sees the story in quite a different light. This viewing, with time for discussion, will take the entire period.

2. Ask students to find, reread, and develop the same type of treatment for a myth or fairy tale of their choice, and to bring to class on the third day a brief precis of the story, telling who will relate the story, and why it will be different.

Third day:

1. During a brief reading or skills assignment, meet with students one at a time to review the precis, and either approve it or suggest changes.

2. Have students begin, in class, the writing of the myth or fairy tale from the new point of view.

Fourth day:

1. Group evaluation of the papers, with revisions to be made in class. Each group selects one paper to be read aloud to the rest of the class.

2. Papers are turned in for teacher evaluation.

Level II
Imaginative/Narrative
High School Student

THE BEANSTALK AND JACK

We giants have ways of not only making you talk, but of finding out what goes on down where you tiny people live. So it was when I heard about this kid named Jack. He lived with his mother who was a poor widow. In fact, they were so poor that she sent Jack to the market with their only cow, to sell it in exchange for food.

Did Jack fall over the little man?

On his way, Jack stumbled on a little mar selling beans. The little guy knew when he had a good thing going and Jack, the sucker that he was, traded his cow for the beans.

Can you re-cast this sentence? Suggest you begin with "When —"

Jack's mother was outraged and rightfully so. [Heartbroken when she threw the beans out the window, he couldn't believe his eyes next day when overnight they sprouted into giant beanstalks.]

Did Jack climb on a beanstalk

I had nothing against Jack until the dude climbed those beans up to my cloud, and then invaded my castle. When I woke

Did you sleep in your napsack?

from my knap, I saw the turkey trying to make off with my golden goose.

It was then that I made my historical comment, "He-e-e-y-y-y, man, I smell some bad blood!" I chased him out of the door and tried to follow closely as he went skipping across the tops of the clouds, but his miniature size gave him a definite advantage when walking or running on water vapor.

He beat me to the beanstalk, and slid down. I climbed down in pursuit, but Jack was playing dirty. He was standing at the bottom, with an axe in his hand and a devlish grin on his face.

After having a giant fall on him, he survives to regret something?

Most people think that David always beats Goliath, but this case proved otherwise. Jack's only regret today is that he was standing under me when he inflicted the final, fatal blow to the beanstalk.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

There are not a great many problems with this paper. The style is fresh and breezy, alternating colloquialisms such as "turkey" with a mock semi-formal prose such as is seen in the last sentence of paragraph 5.

The main job of the assignment--to see a familiar story in a different way through another's eyes was, I felt, well-done. The character of the giant comes across quite well. There is originality evident here and imagination as well.

I might ask the writer to practice reading his work aloud, slowly, to hear as well as see what he has written. He might then have avoided the expressions that led to the comments on his paper.

Level I
Practical/Informative

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

FRIENDLY NOTES AND POSTCARD FORM

Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. Address a postcard correctly
2. Compose a concise and interesting note to a friend
3. Use colorful and precise language in describing an event or detail
4. Observe basic sentence structure and conventions

Preparation: The seventh-grade students have embarked on an individual writing project that involves the narration of an imaginary journey, a personal odyssey. Each narration is to be illustrated by a film, still pictures, transparencies, tape, or some other medium of their choice.

Procedure: The postcard is introduced as a form to communicate to a distant friend one or two vivid impressions of a trip. The teacher projects a transparency of several sample messages on a standard postcard form. The class is asked to note the placement and correct form for the address and to discuss the content and style of the message. (The concept of style has been discussed previously in relation to some of the literature selections that have been studied.) Together, teacher and class compose several messages on the chalkboard, drawing upon incommon experiences for ideas.

Writing Assignment: Using the postcard form supplied by the teacher, compose a friendly note to a distant friend. Imagine that you are at some exciting spot in your "odyssey project." Select several interesting details or a new acquaintance to describe to your friend. Try to make your friend see and feel as you do by your choice of precise and colorful words. Use complete sentences. Follow the correct form for the address, date, salutation, and close of your message. You may complete your postcard by adding on the reverse side a picture or drawing that represents your location at the time of writing the message.

Students enjoyed doing this assignment. Even some who do not usually complete assigned work were motivated to finish this one. Based on the theme of the class unit, it allowed for individual response to a general subject.

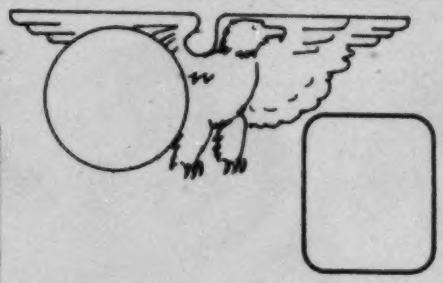
April 9, 1976

Dear Sandy,

You'll never guess what happened to me while I was here in the human mind. I ran into one of the strangest, ugliest monsters I've ever seen. The first thing I did was panic when it came near me. So I ran and found a place to hide and then it went away. Later I learned that the name of the monster was fear.

Love,

Rita



POST CARD

Sandy Perez

8833 E. 6th St.

Los Angeles, California
90023

Very good.
First letter of name should be capitalized: like Rita, Fear

Dec. 6, 3076

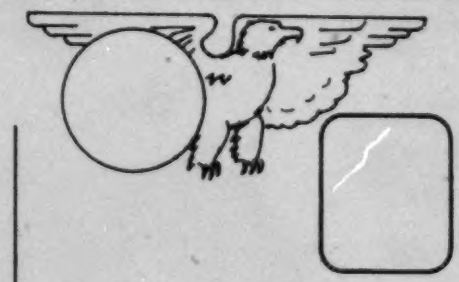
Dear Onzonk,

It's so bright here at the sun. The rays are just right. It's a sight seeing to molecules hit. And those cold spots — their out of this world. Cold one minute, hot the next. Miss you & that star we keep looking at in the horizon.

Universaly yours,

Rudy

they are = they're



POST CARD

Mr. Onzonk Eleop

Star 3 Galactic Way

Big Dipper, Milkyway
500001

Mail is so slow — the took three light years to reach me.
Note spelling of homophones: two, they're

April 9, 1976

Dear Hernando, sp. the

Can you beileve me here in bottom of the sea? It's sure beautiful down here.

The enchanting blue of the sea & the fanning of the seaweed as if in a dream. It's so beautifui.

But still I miss the fragrance of our tree. The shade & the breeze. Oh, how I wish I was home.

Undecidedly yours,

Rudy

Read these aloud. Are they complete?

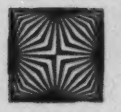
I can believe (note spelling) because you helped me to see and feel with you!

POST CARD

Mr. Hernando Rodriguez

3333 Tree Branch Lane

Los Angeles, California
90023



SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

BUSINESS LETTER AND CORRECT ENVELOPE FORM

Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. Address an envelope correctly.
2. Compose a business letter inquiring about a specific job opening.
3. Observe basic sentence structure and conventions in the composition of the letter.
4. Follow the correct format presented in class as appropriate for a formal business letter. This will include:

    a. Proper margins
    b. Proper headings
    c. Proper introduction
    d. Proper closing
    e. Appropriate information about the applicant
    f. Legible handwriting in ink or typing on white standard unlined paper

Preparation: Tenth grade students involved in Life English (Basic English) are given writing assignments based on the assessed needs of the students. One such need is to have them compose a business letter in response to an announcement of a particular job opening in which they might be interested. The job opening may be real or fictional.

Procedure: Before the students begin their writing assignment, the teacher explains why the writing of a good business letter is important. Students are asked to present situations in which they would need to write such a letter. The response varies from class to class, but usually the following reasons are given for writing such a letter:

1. Request information
2. Inquire about a job or answer an advertisement
3. Complain about or praise a certain product
4. Respond to an article in the newspaper

Reasons are discussed as to why standard English should be used and why the letter should follow a specific format. The appropriate content of the letter is presented before the students begin to write.

Writing Assignment: Using the form of the business letter, compose a letter to a prospective employer inquiring about a job you would be interested in obtaining. Include in your letter an explanation of the specific job you want, where you saw the advertisement, a brief autobiography, any specific qualifications you have, and a phone number and address where you can be reached. Use complete sentences and follow the correct form for the address, date, salutation, and close of your letter. Address an envelope following the proper format and enclose your finished copy in the envelope.

Students seem to enjoy the assignment, especially when they realize that this particular skill might make the difference between obtaining a job they want and having to accept a job which does not interest them.

Level III
Practical/Informative
High School Student

BUSINESS LETTER

20010 Carson Avenue
Carson, California 90746
March 3, 1976

Mr. Jim Brown
J. C. Penney's
1052 Avalon Street
Carson, California

Dear Sir:

I am applying for the job of part-time cashier or part-time salesman. ~~At the age of 15 I am willing~~ I am fifteen years old and I would like to learn about the selling business. Currently, I am a student at Banning High School in Wilmington, California. I have completed courses in algebra, basic electricity, biology, automotives. This is my second year in high school, and I am doing ~~pretty good~~ very well.

In addition to the above, I have completed a course in work experence. ~~The only work that~~ I have had experience working with people in ~~is that of~~ industrial maintainence ~~engineer~~, exterior maintainence, and childcare.

I think I ~~will be~~ am qualified for this job, and it will be a good experence for me. My telephone number is 774-0000. I can be reached at almost any time. I would like to have an interview at your convenience.

Sincerly Yours,

Fred B. Baker

Teacher's Note

Corrections or suggested changes in a student's paper are usually made during an individual conference.

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

EXPOSITORY PARAGRAPH ON LITERATURE

Procedure: Earlier in the semester, the class had worked with A Programed Approach to Writing, by Gordon, developing an understanding of topic, assertion, and supporting details through discussion of and assignments in paragraph writing. I also emphasized the concluding sentence, which is often neglected. The class had written several paragraphs concerned with various aspects of literary selections they had read before the present lesson. In every case they needed much help in structuring their material.

For this assignment, I taught a lesson on the use of transition words and phrases. We discussed the differences, often subtle, between certain transition words and their use in linking details. Then I gave the students a list of transition words to use in their writing.

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph in which you develop the given topic sentence with specific details drawn from Chapter 5 of Scott O'Dell's Island of the Blue Dolphins. (The class had just completed a study of the book.) Be sure to follow these steps in preparing your paper:

1. Reread Chapter 5, looking for the events or experiences that made life difficult for Karana's people. Every time you come to anything that seems to be a difficulty, write it down.

2. Look over your list. Group any events that seem to relate. Omit or cross out any that, on second look, you decide do not fit.

3. Arrange your details from the chapter in ascending order of importance, with the detail you think most important listed last.

4. Write your rough draft, using transition words to link your details. Be sure to use a transition word that indicates that the last detail is intended to be the most important one.

5. Use a concluding sentence that sums up what you have said and/or that draws from words or phrases you have used.

6. Give your paper a title that reflects the content of your individual paragraph.

I moved about the room while they wrote, providing help to those who needed it. Although the class had had much work in structured paragraph writing, they still required suggestions and direction during this composing experience. Papers could be revised and recopied at home.

Level II
Analytical/Expository
Junior High School Student

LIFE AFTER THE ALEUTS

Life was difficult for Karana's people after the Aleuts left. To begin with, the women had to snare fowl, find fish and build canoes because most of the men had died in the battle between the Aleuts and Karana's people. In addition, the animals that once belonged to Karana's people roamed with the wild dogs and they would steal the people's food. After the men who hadn't died in the battle recovered, they fought with the women because they took the chores that had once belonged to them. Finally, and most important, the memory of those who died saddened Karana's people greatly. Life would probably never be the way it had been before the Aleuts had come.

sp.

It isn't possible to understand what people the pronouns refer to

good transition

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Excellent conclusion.

You need a bit more discussion about their grief since it's the most important detail. Otherwise, this is excellent.

Level II
Analytical/Expository
Junior High School Student

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE GHALAS-AT TRIBE

Life was difficult for Karana's people after the Aleuts ~~came~~ left. [Her people had the worst possible time that they had ever known of.] [They counted up the number of people that were left in the tribe. It was forty-two, even counting old & crippled. The number dead was about 15.] The whole villiage was in sorrow. Now the women who had never hunted before had to take the place of the men that had died. The people were afraid that the women had to go out & face the dangers that were beyond the villiage. ~~The men were upset with this~~ argue about women doing their job, so the women would harvest & the men would hunt. There was hardly any food in the villiage, so each individual was assigned to a different job. Meanwhile the wild dog pack was getting bigger, contributing to the loss of food, meaning that they stole the food from the tribe. Now the tribe was in an akward position. (No chief, little food, & part of the tribe gone.) They elected a new chief who decided to go to Catalina to get some help, so the whole tribe could be rescued. He left the tribe & started out for Catalina. The tribe was in a state of curiosity. [Wondering if a ship would ever come to get them.] Now, once again the tribe was left alone without a leader. [At least for awhile.] This was a very hard time for the tribe of the Ghalas-at.

This almost repeats 1st sentence & doesn't move the pt along

Condense into 1 sentence

sp.

You haven't made clear 2 impt things
① fear was due to superstition
② arguments between men and women also resulted

good transition word

sp.

ss frag

ss frag

ss frag

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Conclusion really repeats topic sentence.

More transition words need to be used. Read other comments.

You've listed last chronological fact last. You were asked to list most important reason last.

You need to condense ideas and tighten up your writing so you're not re-telling the story.

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

EDITORIAL WRITING

Objectives: To teach the student to:

1. Have a controlling idea -- a sentence that presents the topic and the student's intentions (intentions may be stated or implied.)

   a. Put the issue into specific rather than general terms
   b. State assumptions clearly -- choose words that express clear, precise meaning
   c. Use appropriate language
   d. Understand difference between dispute (disagreement) and argument (logical ordered presentation of ideas)

2. Choose a method of organizing and presenting ideas.

   a. Use the rhetorical question
   b. Define terminology to avoid misunderstanding
   c. Examine or consider the opposing view objectively and fairly
   d. Logical conclusion

3. Enrich ideas with details.

   a. Description
   b. Narration
   c. Evidence (avoiding bias and emotion)

4. Link ideas with transitional elements.

   a. Transitional words
   b. Repetition of key words, phrases, or ideas

Procedure:

First day: Introduce lesson by explaining purpose and objectives. Hand out copies of a sample editorial, pointing out essentials that make it good and/or bad. Ask students to examine newspapers or magazines for editorials and bring them to class. Post these on the board or duplicate them and hand them out to students. (The latter method will provide more opportunity for analysis and critique.)

Second day: Divide the class into small groups to prepare for a panel discussion on controversial subject. Encourage students to adhere to guidelines stated in the objectives for the lesson. Select panel members.

Third day: Conduct a panel discussion. (Depending on the nature of the subject, more time may be needed for preparation before discussion takes place.)

Fourth day: Students separate into small groups to evaluate the panel discussion of the previous day. Students vote for the panel member(s) who followed the lesson objectives most closely.

Fifth day: Students again separate into small groups and write a group editorial supporting or refuting the position of one of the panel members.

Sixth day: Read the group editorials aloud; invite class discussion. Assign for homework: Write an editorial commenting on the panel discussion topic, one of the editorials posted earlier in the week, or one of the student's own choice.

Evaluation: Students' individual editorials will serve this purpose.

Note: The school's debate squad was invited to come to the class and present a debate to motivate students' editorial responses.

Level II
Analytical/Expository
High School Student

DO WE NEED PRISONS AND WHY?

Prison punishment would be very helpful if it were effective. To begin with, if it were effective one would be able to ~~lave~~ leave his home and not even worry about someone breaeeing in. Also people would be happier.

Prison punishment does a lot of good, but there are ways that it could be better. First of all, there should be longer punishment, harder work, and less fun and games. Second, the criminal should know if he commits a crime and gets convicted he will not be back on the streets again for quite some time.

Jails are needed because if there weren't any jails or prisons, criminals would just take over.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

The student begins with a good controlling sentence. However, it is supported by some assumptions that are not at all evident.

The second paragraph makes some interesting points that are not developed or supported by reasoning or evidence.

The concluding paragraph, while possibly true, does not have any logical reasoning or evidence preceding it.

The student makes an effort to use transitional words to tie ideas together. Without the spelling errors and with a little more detailed evidence, this paper would satisfactorily fulfill the assignment.

Level III
Analytical/Expository

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

ESSAY TO PERSUADE

Objectives: The student grows in ability to:

1. Formulate ideas and opinions based upon current concerns rooted in the past.
2. Relate current concerns and literary themes.
3. Write essays based upon the use of references, discussions, and wide reading experiences.

Pre-writing experiences (three weeks): The students read, discuss, and complete suggested writing assignments in chapters 1-5 in The Lively Art of Writing, by Lucile Vaughn Payne.

Students read and discuss topic-related literature from Currents by Thomas Sanders.

Students read supplementary literature related to specific essay topics.

Pre-essay writing experiences (last week of three weeks): Students prepare a list of pro and con arguments related to their choice of thesis, following the procedure suggested in The Lively Art of Writing.

Full and final thesis notes are read to the class and the teacher for suggestions and revisions before the essay is begun.

The assignment: Using your thesis notes, write an essay of several paragraphs on the topic. Include all of the arguments, pro and con, which you have assembled in your preliminary notes on the thesis statement. Arrange your material into well-developed paragraphs that will persuade your readers to accept your thesis. (This is based on Payne text.)

Level III
Analytical/Expository
Junior High School Student

COMPUTERS VS. TEACHERS

Thousands of years ago, a young prehistoric cave dweller probably learned how to chip stone from a teacher. His teacher was probably his father. The boy saw his father choose the right kind of stone, hold it in his hand a certain way and chip it's edges with a chipping tool. Each move the father made was a stimulus to the boy. The boy responded by trying to copy his father's movements. And each time the boy copied his father faithfully, the father nodded his approval. The father was giving his son the reinforcement of praise, and this encouraged the boy to go on.

All through history, people have had humans teach them. Recently, however, machines have been invented to replace teachers. These machines can't deal with a person's soul, only his mind. He isn't a person, he's an object. Thus, a computerized learning system deprives the student of his identity. He is classified as a number instead of a human being.

Admittedly, a computer progresses at the students' own rate and adjusts to the student's abilities. But the machine does not allow the students to go back and review their work.

There is much more to education than the embedding of facts in young minds--which a machine does supremely well. But no machine can relate ideas deep into the personality of a student and make him live. This is what a good teacher does, students know this and want it. A great deal of what we call education is simply learning by example. Wisdom is not the influence of ideas on machines but on people. A teacher can be an unforgettable example of wisdom, a machine can't.

Dr. Francis Keppel, Dean of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard, said, "I'll accept the machine as a replacement for a teacher when it can run a birthday party for my young daughter, when it can comfort a sick child, or encourage a child who needs reassurance. Then I'll go along with the idea that a machine is as good as a teacher."

A computer can never replace the warmth and understanding of a human teacher. A teacher is not just a dispenser of knowledge. She is a source of encouragement and discipline, a storyteller, and an example of the way intelligence works on human character. No machine can duplicate these qualities.

A student working only with a computer doesn't have a chance to make use of what he has learned by joining in a class project. He can't develop the ability to express himself in public by taking part in class discussions. If he were in a ~~large~~ teacher-led classroom, he would have all those opportunities.

~~In conclusion,~~ A computerized learning system knows facts and numbers, not hearts or souls.

do a teacher always she? do a student always he? "How could you indicate throughout your essay that student and teacher might refer to either sex?

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Best effort yet, Nancy. Your introduction is outstanding--nice use of resources! You needed more in your concluding paragraph, but its brevity doesn't distract that much from overall excellence.

Level III
Analytical/Expository
Junior High School Student

POPULARITY

Julie was always very shy. She never had many friends, but never really tried to get any. One day she decided not to be quiet and wait for a friend to come to her. She was going to find one herself. Julie met Wendy and they became good friends. Since Julie made one friend she felt, after that, very confident that she would make others. The search for popularity generally leads to self-improvement.

Popularity gives a person chances to meet new people and pick up traits of others which they think can improve themselves. Having popularity is good as it lets the person have many new relationships which are valuable in life. Also, the social life of that person is broadened. As he meets people, different traits are seen. From these, if any are admired, they can be added to his character to better it.

Popularity can lead to conceit but not in all cases. Just because a person is popular does not mean he is conceited. It just means that others like him very much. Popularity can let one pick up bad traits of others but after, get rid of these traits one can avoid them later on in life.

Popularity gives high self esteem. If one feels confident, in knowing he has many friends to be with, trust, etc. then he will go on with that feeling in him and not lose it.

One can attempt to better their personality by increasing their popularity. More friends give more self esteem and more self esteem improves your personality.

These sentences are in opposition.

Making one friend and popularity are not the same thing.

agr.

very vague - doesn't really say anything

Is a person always he?

what? (unclear)

agr.

Need a broader concluding sentence after this one

TEACHER'S COMMENT: Kit--you seem to understand Lucile's essay structure--good! Work on expressing your thoughts more explicitly--expunge vague statements!

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

These students share common handicaps. They are only fourteen years old, have had limited experiences, and are being asked to form opinions on topics to which they have given little, if any, previous thought. Just as a novice bowler or golfer is recognized as such, these students and their efforts must be placed in the proper perspective.

Instruction in developing thought processes through inductive/deductive reasoning, parallel structure, comparison/contrast, and other writing techniques will benefit all of these students. As they receive instruction and are given opportunities to practice techniques, they will, ideally, accumulate skills in developing an essay style.

Each student needs an individualized impetus to encourage improvement. Some need special, personal attention, others need a businesslike analysis. The teacher must determine which motivating technique suits each student.

The teacher provides time for individual conferences with each student to explain any confusing corrections and to discuss ways in which to improve weak areas. Excellence and improvement are shared with the entire class if the students being praised have no objections.

All suggestions/corrections written on student papers are done with a pencil. There are two advantages in such a practice:

1. The teacher can erase it if the comment is not adequate or if the correction is later reconsidered.
2. The student can erase it if the comment or correction is meaningless, or too painful or harsh.

No letter grades are placed on the students' papers. This is a deliberate attempt to discourage competition and to encourage analysis of the paper itself, complete with comments and corrections. All comments are personalized with the student's name to encourage the feeling of individuality and to emphasize the teacher's interest in individual growth.

Level III
Analytical/Expository

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

ESSAY BASED ON TENNYSON'S "GARETH AND LYNETTE"

Procedure: This lesson was used in an English 10 A Academic class as the first multi-paragraph essay assignment. The poem was read orally in class, with emphasis, first, on the enjoyment of the story and, second, on the recognition of certain qualities of character such as the mother's reluctance to have her youngest son leave home and the young man's desire to be on his own and to prove himself in the world.

The composing experience covered three days.

First day:

1. Discuss again the characteristics, emotions, and actions of Queen Bellicent, Gareth, and Lynette, which we can understand easily because we have often observed them in people we see every day.

2. Discuss how to formulate a topic sentence for a paragraph in which one would show the similarities between the queen and a mother of today. Put a sample or two on the board. How could this topic sentence be changed into a paragraph on the similarities between young people then and now?

3. Preliminary Assignment: Each student will write a paragraph comparing <u>either</u> mothers or teenagers then and now, and referring to specific incidents in the story which show the characteristics.

   (I usually plan another activity for the day following this assignment to give myself time to read the paragraphs and to make copies of several of the more successful paragraphs for use on the second day.)

Second day:

1. Using the overhead projector or the board, show the class one or two paragraphs that are not successful. There will usually be several that do not have topic sentences or are inadequately developed or lack specific examples. (Such models should be anonymous papers from previous classes.)

2. Hand out copies of several good student paragraphs and discuss them. Notice several problems in diction. Does the word <u>kid</u> belong in this type of writing, for example? Which one does the best job of directly relating each trait to the present? Is there any material used which could not be substantiated from the text? Why does Lynette so often come out sounding like a spoiled brat? Is her unpleasantness a cover-up for another feeling? (She thinks the king hasn't taken her request seriously.) Do people sometimes direct their anger with one person toward another? What about Lynette's frequent changes of mind? Does she really understand what this quest means to Gareth? How do we know?

3. Discuss how to formulate an opening paragraph for an essay that would show the similarities between the mother and the young people in the story on the one hand, and their counterparts today on the other. Point out that the well-written opening paragraph should control the ideas in the complete essay. (Mention that the opening paragraph should normally be written first, so that it can help the writer to clarify his/h purpose as well as to inform the reader of what is to follow.) Notice in the examples the use of words like many and most, rather than all. Why are these words better?

4. Discuss transition words which would be useful in this essay.

Third day:

Writing Assignment: Write a three-paragraph essay, showing that the characters in Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette" are similar to people of our own time. You may use material from the sample paragraphs if you wish. Be sure that the opening paragraph states your controlling idea clearly. The real purpose of the assignment is to write a good, well-organized essay this time, so that you will understand how to go about it next time.

Level III
Analytical/Expository
High School Student

ESSAY ON GARETH AND LYNETTE

Good opening

Even though the times change, human nature is generally the same throughout the years. In Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette" the characters have basically the same qualities that most of us today have. The situations may have changed, but the attitudes really haven't.

For example, Gareth and Lynette are, in many ways, comparable to modern teenagers. Gareth wanted to leave home and put his two cents in to improve the world. He wanted to prove to himself and his mother, who was very protective, that if he were on his own, he would accomplish many things. He was also pretty awed by his older brothers, which is typical of a teenage guy (boy) today, especially when he is the "baby" of the family. Lynette was a very moody girl who vacillated in her ideas. She was pretty picky about her boyfriend being of high-enough quality. She didn't want to associate with an unproven kitchen knave. After he was a hero, she changed her mind because he was then something to be proud of. These are actions that typify teenagers' attitudes today as well as the attitudes of Gareth and Lynette.

Rather slangy

Another example is the way Queen Bellicent, Gareth's mother, can be compared to many parents of today. When Gareth wants to leave home, she, of course, wants him to stay where she can keep an eye on him. I guess a lot of mothers today also feel that way about their children. After Gareth's mind is made up, and she sees she can't change it, she wants him to make her proud of him in whatever he chooses to do. A lot of parents today want, to some degree, their children to accomplish something that they can look back on and point to, as a major achievement.

TEACHER'S COMMENT: You seem to have a good understanding of how to organize the short essay. Your writing reflects your understanding of the story. You need to be careful to maintain a consistent level of usage. In this essay, the conversational slang is not appropriate.

Level III
Analytical/Expository

SAMPLE COMPOSING EXPERIENCE

DEFINING A NONSENSE WORD

Procedure: This assignment is useful in understanding how to define, why definition is necessary, and what semantic considerations enter into clear communication. The following steps have been taken before students do this assignment:

1. Thorough study of how definitions are constructed

   Strict, logical definitions
   Informal definitions
   Extended definitions

2. Explanation and practice with denotation and connotation (in advertising, colloquial speech, persuasive writing, news reporting)

3. Exercises defining abstract and concrete terms; exercises in writing informal definitions of abstract nouns, such as honor, love, patriotism

4. Analysis of how words mean; how we derive meaning from context

Writing Assignment: Students are then asked to create a nonsense term on their own or to borrow from a list of nonsense terms provided (mostly from Carrollian portmanteau words), and do the following writing assignment:

1. Choose one of these made-up words or make up one of your own. Then write a DICTIONARY ENTRY for your nonsense word, following the format of an actual dictionary. The entry should include all or most of the following:

   a. the term
   b. pronunciation guide in parentheses
   c. part of speech
   d. etymology in brackets
   e. two or more meanings
   f. other forms of the word and their meanings
   g. special uses or obsolete forms of the word
   h. synonyms
   i. example of usage -- the word in a sentence

   Here is an example written by a senior student:

   prisool (prizool) n. 1. a public building for the confinement and safe-keeping for persons between the ages of 6 and 18; 2. a place or establishment where instruction is forced upon persons attending; 3. a place of imprisonment until a degree or diploma is obtained; 4. prisoolmen, n.; one who attends a prisool; 5. prisooling, v.; obtaining instruction by attending a prisool. He went to prisool five days a week taking in all the information he could. At prisool today, John learned about nouns and verbs. L. Syn. see prison.

2. Expand the dictionary entry into a short, descriptive definition essay. Include in the essay the strict logical definition (probably the first one you list in the dictionary entry) and enough characteristics of the word to make up a fairly complete definition.

Follow-up Activity: Select the best results from this assignment and publish a class Dictionary of Nonsense Terms which is then distributed to all class members. Students invariably find this dictionary fun and instructive to read.

Level III
Analytical/Expository
High School Student

SAMPLE STUDENT PAPER

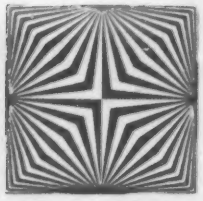
A prisool is a public building for the confinement and safekeeping of persons between the ages of 6 and 18. The people who attend prisools are usually referred to as stumates. They begin in kinder-confinement and work their way to first-cell. When they reach seventh-cell, the warciple who runs the prisool talks to each stumate about going into different fields of study. The stumates continue prisooling and if they are good and have reached the 12th-cell before the age of 18, they may be up for paroma.

What goes on inside a prisool is another story. Stumates are well-confined in order for instruction to be given. Most stumates take instruction in readily, for they don't want to be sent to detentfinement. If they can make their way to 12th-cell as soon as possible, they can get their paroma. Then out to the world they can go, unless they prefer to continue in prisool.

TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

This response to the second part of the nonsense-definition exercise exhibits the writer's awareness of how new words are coined, how words mean what they mean, and how meanings depend in part upon context. The writer's sense of humor in composing this short informal definition communicates readily and directly with the reader.

This example of student's writing does effectively reach a student audience. Used together with the instructions for the exercise, it gives heart to others who, at first, think they cannot create a new word and define it.



EVALUATION MATERIALS

MARKING AND GRADING PAPERS

These suggestions may be helpful to the teacher when evaluating student compositions.

I. Commenting on contents and marking errors

A. Over twenty years ago, William Dusel pointed out the value of comments that (a) show appreciation of successful writing, (b) emphasize the importance of purpose and ideas, and (c) indicate faults in such a way as to facilitate learning. Questions and responses to ideas and usages written in the margin and a summary comment on the paper as a whole can provide the student with information and motivation to improve in written expression.*

When comments are offered, they should include some words of encouragement as well as one or two specific suggestions for improvement.
Examples:

"You really convinced me! Your examples were logically organized in support of your thesis sentence. Your choice of words maintained a formal but lively tone. Remember to proofread for pronoun reference and punctuation -- see margin notes." (Good paper)

"You suggest a clear purpose -- the need for more career-related courses -- in your opening sentence. But you offer only one reason to persuade your reader. It might help if you reviewed your list of possible reasons after you had read through your first draft. Try reading your paper aloud to catch those run-on sentences and fragments." (Poor paper)

B. A teacher points out the errors in order to show the student how to improve his or her own writing. One should not, therefore, indicate errors that the student could not be expected to correct on the basis of present knowledge and general ability.

C. The markings or comments should be intelligible to the student, they should be legible, and they should use vocabulary that has been made familiar to the student.

D. If symbols are used, the teacher should supply the student with a list of the symbols and their meanings. The explanation of symbols should be made in words that the student understands. If the list used appears in a text, give the student the reference and any additional explanation needed.

E. The marking should be based on the instruction given in the course. Assumption of previous training should be reasonable and realistic.

F. The marking, including any comments made, should justify the grade given.

*William J. Dusel, "Some Semantic Implications of Theme Correction," English Journal, XLIV (1955), p. 390. Reprinted in A Guide for Evaluating Student Composition, edited by Sister M. Judine, IHM, for the National Council of Teachers of English (Champaign, Illinois, 1965).

II. Appraising the noted weaknesses and strengths

A. The appraisal should take into consideration the performance competency level of the student.

B. In required courses, the appraisal should also consider the scholastic capacity of the student. Many teachers follow the practice of reserving A for real merit and F for lack of effort or inexcusable carelessness. B, C, or D, then, indicates how successful the student was in relation to his or her own capacity.

C. In courses like Advanced Composition, the teacher should establish academic or college preparatory standards with the class.

D. The appraisal should take into consideration the extent and type of instruction given in the course up to that point. (Instruction is more than merely admonition.)

III. Assigning a grade

A. The merits of the content and organization should be weighed with the clarity of the sentences and the correctness of the mechanics.

B. Some teachers assign three grades (example: C/B/A); the first grade for content or supporting material; the second grade for organization or logical arrangement of material and clear opening and concluding statements linked by use of transition words; and the last grade for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and neatness. Other teachers assign two grades (example: C/B); the first grade for content and organization, the second one for mechanics and sentence structure.

C. Teachers who prefer to give one grade may find the following chart helpful.

	Ideas and Organization (50%)	Sentence Structure and Mechanics (50%)
A	Good	Good
B	Good	Fair
B	Fair	Good
C	Fair	Fair
C	Good	Poor
C	Poor	Good
D	Poor	Poor
F	Unacceptable because of lack of effort and/or inexcusable carelessness.	

TIME SAVERS

1. Grade only every fourth or fifth paper that is written. Alternate the numbers, so that every student's work is eventually graded several times during the semester.

2. Use student readers. Students organize themselves into groups and read each other's work. Papers are proofread by each person in the group. Each group selects one paper to be read aloud to the class. If possible, this paper should be duplicated to provide a copy for each student.

3. Exchange papers with other classes. Students do not put the usual heading on their papers, but rather sign them with a coded identifying mark. Sets of papers are exchanged under teacher arrangement. Papers are read, comments made, and papers returned, and then the writers study the comments on their own papers.

4. Use a cassette tape recorder. The teacher makes no written comments on the paper. Rather, s/he speaks into a tape recorder while reading each paper, talking to the student, pointing out weaknesses as well as strong points, for 30 seconds to three minutes. The recorded tape, with student papers discussed on it in alphabetical order, is brought to class for private auditing by the students. They are called up to listen to comments on their own paper, one at a time, using a headset to avoid disturbing the class. At the end of the taped comments on his or her own paper, the student shuts off the machine and calls the next student to the tape. The teacher carries on the usual lesson while students are listening. They take their papers with them to the recorder and mark comments on the papers as they listen.

5. Use a set of papers as a quick diagnostic device. Instead of marking individual papers, read a class set rapidly, noting the kinds of problems that seem evident. Accumulate a list of these and organize them into a lesson for the following day.

6. Do not grade any papers for the first month. Write comments sparingly, checking only for one type of problem -- e.g., punctuation, subject-verb agreement -- at a time.

7. Use a student journal. The first ten minutes of the class may be spent by students writing in the journal. The type of material that goes into the journal may be totally free or somewhat structured, and the journals are not graded. Instead, the teacher makes spot checks of the journals and uses these checks as material for lessons.

8. Establish a rubric. Pass out copies of an average paper, perhaps one deserving a grade of C, and go through the paper with the class, sentence by sentence, until you arrive at a grade. Have the students mark these sample papers with you. Use this rubric to help group or individual evaluation of papers.

9. Instead of writing comments and correction symbols on the paper, make a check mark in the margin opposite a problem. The student might then use the rubric mentioned and correct his or her own paper.

10. As often as you can manage, provide for individual, face-to-face conferences. These should be arranged so that they occur during class time, while the students are doing individual or group work on their papers.

STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION FORM

At each level in the program, students should be trained to examine their own papers critically, using an analysis form designed by the teacher to emphasize the writing objective(s) on which the class is working. The sample form that follows was designed for use with paragraphs written by students at Level II.

Paragraph Analysis-Exposition Name _____

Items A through E must be completed with words quoted directly from your paragraph.

A. Write the topic sentence of your paragraph. Circle the key words for development by detail in succeeding sentences.

_____

_____

B. Quote the phrases or complete sentences that develop each detail related to the key words.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. Quote any phrases or sentences that contain a detail that <u>does not</u> relate to the key words (the central idea.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

D. Quote the sentence that re-emphasizes the central idea of your paragraph.

_____

_____

E. Write a new topic sentence including key words that more exactly express your central idea.

_____

When students have completed the forms, selected examples can be used for discussion in small groups or by the whole class.

COMPOSITION CHECKLIST
(LEVELS I-III)

Expository/Analytical

WRITER'S NAME _____ DATE _____

TITLE OF COMPOSITION _____

WRITER:

1. Review your composition for each of the following essential elements.
2. Revise your composition until you feel that it represents your best work.
3. Clip this checklist to your composition and give it to another student to read.

READER:

1. Read the attached composition twice.
2. Check each item below that you feel accurately describes this composition.

CONTENT:

___ Has a clear purpose or point.
___ Provides a title that suggests what this point is.
___ Seems to have a specific audience in mind. (Name the person or group._____)
___ Gives at least three necessary examples, facts, or details to make the point clear.
___ Arranges ideas in the best order.
___ Begins each paragraph with a clear topic sentence or idea.
___ Keeps the discussion in each paragraph centered around the topic idea.
___ Shows clear relationship among paragraphs.
___ Uses an opening sentence to catch the attention of the reader.
___ Emphasizes the purpose or point in a concluding sentence or paragraph.
___ Uses exact words and complete sentences to help the reader understand the purpose.

CONVENTIONS:

___ Uses a subject in each sentence that agrees with the predicate verb.
___ Has a clear antecedent for each pronoun.
___ Begins each sentence with a capital letter and ends it with a suitable mark of punctuation.
___ Has no misspelled words. (Check all words you are not positive you know how to spell.)
___ Employs correct punctuation marks within sentences.
___ Uses the standard form for heading, margins, and spacing.

READER'S COMMENTS:

READER'S SIGNATURE _____

COMPOSITION RATING SCALE
(LEVELS II-III)

Before you hand it in, have you checked your composition to be sure that you observed the following:

___ 1. Used the proper heading and margins?

___ 2. Used a title which reflects the assignment?

___ 3. Checked your spelling?

___ 4. Used proper pronoun references?

___ 5. Opened and concluded effectively?

FOR TEACHER USE:

Rating scale - A yardstick for measuring your improvement or need for improvement in composition skills. Only those items that apply to the attached composition are rated below.

	Unsatisfactory		Average		Outstanding
1. Organization	1	2	3	4	5
2. Research	1	2	3	4	5
3. Stays within narrowed topic	1	2	3	4	5
4. Good thesis sentence	1	2	3	4	5
5. Good conclusion	1	2	3	4	5
6. Freedom from spelling errors	1	2	3	4	5
7. Freedom from sentence fragments	1	2	3	4	5
8. Freedom from grammatical errors	1	2	3	4	5

COMPOSITION RATING SCALE
(LEVELS II-V)

Student _____ Composition Title _____ Date _____

Reader's Summary Comment _____

A. Content - Value 50%

Purposeful |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Uncertain
Thesis and topic sentences
are persuasive, sincere, focused.

Organized |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Rambling
Arrangement of ideas is logical,
planned, orderly.

Comprehensive |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Restricted
Choice of support material is
complete, relevant, convincing.

Specific |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Vague
Development of details is
concrete, definite, exact.

Convincing |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Unconvincing
Author's tone and point of view are
perceptive, clear, consistent.

B. Word Choice and Style - Value 30%

Fluent |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Limited
Vocabulary is vivid,
effective, appropriate.

Mature |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Immature
Sentences are varied, complete,
smooth.

Effective |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Ineffective
Style is distinctive,
colorful, fresh.

C. Conventions - Value 20%

Standard
Grammar/Usage |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Non-Standard
Sentence structure, agreement,
references, etc., are acceptable.

Correct Form |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Incorrect Form
Paragraphing, heading, punctuation,
spelling, are correct.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT COMPOSITION
(LEVELS III-V)

Student_____ Composition Title_____ Date_____

TO THE STUDENT:

The reader has carefully read the attached composition, making suggested corrections on the paper and checking the areas for improvement. Before you correct the errors marked on the paper, you should study the textbook pages noted opposite the errors checked on this form. Add misspelled words to your personal list for mastery.

TO THE TEACHER:

Enter textbook title:_____

Enter appropriate Textbook Page Numbers Below:

ORGANIZING AND DEVELOPING THE COMPOSITION

___ Unity (Does the essay make clear a single point or purpose?)_____
___ Coherence (Does the sequence of paragraphs follow a recognizable pattern? Are transitional words and phrases employed to link paragraphs?) _____
___ Critical thinking (Are assumptions warranted; definitions accurate; uses of evidence sufficient; generalizations justified; problems well defined; statements logical; conclusions well drawn?)_____
___ Clearly stated topic (Does each paragraph in the main body of the paper clearly state or imply a central thought?) _____
___ Unity within the paragraph (Does every detail, fact, or opinion of each paragraph support the central thought?) _____
___ Effective transition (Are appropriate words and phrases used to show the progression of thought within the paragraph?) _____
___ Consistent point of view (Is purposeless shift avoided in person, mood, or tense?) _____

OBSERVING CONVENTIONS IN SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, GRAMMAR, AND USAGE

___ Agreement of subject-verb, pronoun-antecedent (specific one circled)_____
___ Capitalization_____
___ Comma (specific error:_____)_____
___ Comma splice or run-on sentence (specific one circled)_____
___ Coordination or subordination (specific one circled)_____
___ Fragment_____
___ Manuscript form (specific advice:_____)_____
___ Misplaced or dangling modifiers (specific one circled)_____
___ Misuse of passive voice _____
___ Other marks of punctuation (specific error:_____) ___
___ Parallelism _____
___ Pronoun reference _____
___ Shifts in person, number, voice (specific one circled)_____
___ Spelling (specific advice:_____) ___
___ Tense shift _____
___ Vague or awkward construction _____
___ Wrong words _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

1. Head each paper in the following manner:

Title (on first line--centered on page)

(blank)

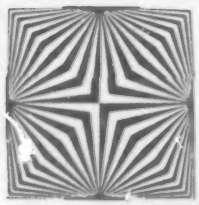
The first word of each paragraph should be indented one inch and the second line should begin at margin line.

2. Capitalize the first and final word of the title and all other words in the title except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions of less than five letters.
3. Use only regulation (wide spaced) paper, 8 1/2" x 11".
4. Write neatly, clearly, and legibly. Soiled or crumpled papers are not acceptable.
5. Write on only one side of the paper and use ink or typewriter for formal compositions.
6. If your paper does not have the left-hand margin marked, establish a margin of approximately one inch and then adhere closely to it. On the right side, leave a margin approximately one-half that on the left side (or one-half inch) and keep it as even as possible.
7. Indent the first word of all paragraphs uniformly one inch. (If using a typewriter, indent five spaces.)
8. Do not use the sign & or the abbreviation etc.
9. Do not abbreviate in the heading or title of your paper.
10. Divide a word only at the end of a syllable. Words of one syllable cannot be divided.
11. Always reread your composition and correct errors in punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure before submitting the paper.
12. Rewrite pages which are not neat because of too many corrections or erasures.
13. If your composition has more than one page, do not put a number on the first page. Beginning with the second page, put an arabic number in the upper right corner of each successive page, with your name under the number.

CORRECTION SYMBOLS

Agr	- Agreement of subject and verb
Awk	- Awkward expression; re-word
/ or Cap	- Change capital to small letter, or vice versa
CF or CS	- Comma fault, or comma splice
Dang	- Dangling gerund, infinitive, or participle
Div	- Division of word at end of line incorrect
Frag	- Sentence fragment
MM or Mis	- Misplaced modifier
//	- Parallel structure not used
¶	- New paragraph needed
P	- Punctuation error
Red	- Redundancy
Ro	- Run-on sentence; sometimes called comma splice or comma fault
Shift	- Unnecessary shift of person, tense, voice, or mood
Sp	- Spelling error
T	- Wrong tense
W	- Wrong choice of word

Enter page numbers that refer to textbook used by the class.



POSITION STATEMENTS

A POSITION STATEMENT[1]

As each English teacher works with students, s/he must make decisions on what to teach and how to teach. When developing instructional guides or selecting textbooks, curriculum committees face similar decisions. Some of these decisions rightly depend on the individual teacher's judgment, but some involve basic issues on which teachers in a large school system should seek consensus.

The Subject Advisory Committee for Secondary English has been endeavoring to identify the basic issues in the field and to frame a position statement on each issue. In arriving at these statements, Committee members studied the pertinent professional literature, took into account the opinions of scholars and national leaders, sought advice from English department chairpersons in Los Angeles City junior and senior high schools, and exercised their own best professional judgment.

The following statements present the current position of the Los Angeles City Schools on issues regarding the teaching of English in junior and senior high schools. The statements, which describe preferred classroom practices, are intended for use of teachers, administrators, curriculum committees, and textbook committees.

WHAT CONSTITUTES ENGLISH?

The English program consists of language study, composition (both oral and written), and literature. Students are taught to think soundly and to organize their thoughts; to listen and read with understanding and discrimination; to speak and write so as to communicate facts and ideas exactly; to enjoy and appreciate a variety of forms of literature; to understand the grammatical structure of the language and to employ accepted usage; to use library research techniques; to spell and punctuate correctly; to write legibly. Each semester's work is organized into units which provide a unifying framework for students to utilize these skills and knowledges for the development of ideas, attitudes, ideals, and values. From the study of literature, students acquire universal values of thought and achievement which characterize civilization.

All components of English are taught in every English course. In required courses, the program is balanced. Although other courses have special emphases, no component is omitted.

Since language learning is a cumulative process, the learning of any specific skill takes time and needs to be reinforced in different contexts at different degrees of complexity as students grow in maturity from grade to grade.

THINKING

Whether students read, write, speak, or listen, the teacher is responsible for providing planned learning activities for improving the quality of their thinking as well as their skill in using the language.

WRITTEN COMPOSITION

A sequential program of writing instruction should be continued in every grade. Teachers are responsible for the specific items listed in the two charts, "Composition Sequence, Grades 7-9" and "Essay Writing in Senior High School."[2]

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[1] Extracts from The Teaching of English in Junior and Senior High Schools, Los Angeles City Schools, Instructional Bulletin No. SC-37, 1967.

[2] The material in the present publication supersedes these charts.

RELATION OF WRITING TO READING

Writing a composition begins with something in the writer's mind, with ideas to be communicated. Other steps in the writing process are vital, but ideas come first.

Literature is one excellent source of ideas for composition, but not all writing and speaking should deal with literature. Some compositions should be based on other school subjects or on the student's experiences.

When composition is based on literature, it should deal with human problems and ethical values as well as literary analysis. The amount of attention to literary form and the author's craft should vary with students' age, maturity, and reading experience and may be greater in senior high school, especially in elective courses in literature.

Spelling is important and should receive attention in every grade. Spelling instruction should be based on diagnosis of students' needs.

GRAMMAR AND USAGE

The teaching of grammar continues in every grade. Knowledge of grammar can help advanced students understand why one expression is preferred to another; it also provides students with terminology for discussing language improvement. Such knowledge is effective, however, only to the extent that students are led to use it to improve speech and writing. This statement applies to the "new grammars" as well as to traditional grammar.

Standard English usage is most successfully learned through efforts to improve speaking and writing. However, textbook drills and teacher-made drills can reinforce items of standard usage taught during writing and speaking activities. Such drills should be preceded by and promptly followed by opportunities for application to speaking or writing.

Much drill should be oral.

Of the many types of drills which may be used, students should devote most time and effort to choosing a preferred language form, eliminating ambiguity in order to communicate clearly, practicing a language pattern, or using a language item in an original sentence. Students should devote less time and effort to classifying or identifying language elements.

Slow learners can improve their use of English with minimal employment of grammatical terminology.

LEVELS OF LANGUAGE

In all grades, students should be taught the facts about levels of language. Students should learn that they may properly use various levels of language in different circumstances. For example, in informal situations (such as conversation, talks to small groups, friendly letters, informal essays), standard informal English is as satisfactory as standard formal or standard literary English. Often it is more appropriate.

The appropriateness of using a level of language or a specific locution in a particular situation will depend on such factors as the following:

The speaker's age
The speaker's purpose
The audience, and its size and composition
The content--narrative or expository, humorous or serious
The communication vehicle: speech, manuscript, print

Sometimes these factors also will determine whether an expression is acceptable as standard English.

Teachers should be aware that a student who habitually uses grossly nonstandard English may face a serious dilemma when urged to learn the type of English taught in school. Nonstandard English may be the normal speech of the student's parents and present associates, and the student may incur resentment, even ostracism, if s/he changes over completely to "school" English. It is recommended that the teacher's attitude and approach reflect the following ideas: (a) If a student's present way of speaking is accepted by family and friends, s/he may not wish to change accustomed ways of speaking to them; (b) however, it is important to the student's future to learn standard English (another way of speaking) as an aid to occupational and social mobility.

CORRECTNESS, PRESCRIPTIVENESS, THE NEW GRAMMAR

Controversy persists regarding a cluster of contrasting concepts--prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar, correctness vs. appropriateness, and rules vs. usage. The position of the Los Angeles City junior and senior high schools on these interrelated issues is as follows:

Standard English is the kind of English used by educated Americans. This statement does not mean that "anything goes"; however, it does mean that the English teacher must keep informed about the results of research on the actual usage of educated Americans, so that students can be provided with realistic and up-to-date information.

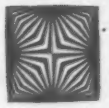
Teachers are entitled to language preferences (e.g., come to see me rather than come and see me, proved rather than proven, because of rather than due to). If a teacher dislikes an accepted locution, there is no reason why s/he should not so inform students. However, s/he should not label it as "incorrect."

The English teacher ceases to be neutral once s/he has become informed about the acceptability of a language item. Since improving students' use of language is part of the teacher's task, s/he must be prescriptive to the extent of pointing out which locutions are acceptable to educated Americans and which are not. The linguist and the scientific grammarian may remain aloof, limiting themselves to description of the many kinds of utterances of American speakers. Yet the English teacher must advise--that is, prescribe--as part of the daily work. However, the teacher's advice should be based on realistic, current information and should be presented tactfully.

Position Statement

The terms correct English and incorrect English imply a simplified view of the nature of language, and they also have connotations of righteousness vs. unrighteousness. Teachers are urged to use the terms standard English and nonstandard English instead and to make plain to students what these terms mean.

It is part of the English teacher's task to teach pupils the structure of the language and how it functions. The controversy regarding the relative merits of traditional grammar and the "new grammars" will continue. English teachers, of course, know traditional grammar; it is urgently recommended that they study the "new grammars" in order to make immediate classroom use of any valuable new insights which may be useful for their students.



TEACHING COMPOSITION: A POSITION STATEMENT

The following* are general principles which members of the NCTE Commission on Composition believe should guide teachers in planning curricula and teaching writing. They are issued as an official position statement of the Commission. The Commission will welcome comments or questions.

1. Life in Language. In many senses, anyone's world is her/his language. Through language we understand, interpret, enjoy, control, and in part create our worlds. The teacher of English, in awakening students to the possibilities of language, can help students to expand and enlarge their worlds, to live more fully.

2. Need for Writing. Writing is an important medium for self-expression, for communication, and for the discovery of meaning--its need increased rather than decreased by the development of new media for mass communication. Practice and study of writing therefore remain significant parts of the school curriculum and central parts of the English course.

3. Positive Instruction. Since a major value of writing is self-expression and self-realization, instruction in writing should be positive. Students should be encouraged to use language clearly, vividly, and honestly; they should not be discouraged by negative correction and proscription. They should be freed from fear and restriction so that their sensitivity and their abilities can develop.

4. Learning by Writing. Learning to write requires writing; writing practice should be a major emphasis of the course. Workbook exercises, drill on usage, and analysis of existing prose are not adequate substitutes for writing.

5. Required Writing. No formula dictates the amount of writing that should be required in a course--a paper a day or a paper a week. Ideally students should be allowed to write when they want to, as much as they want to, and at their own speed. Practically, however, students need class discipline and class discussion as well as freedom, and they should be frequently encouraged and at times required to write.

6. Classroom Writing. Inexperienced writers especially should have an opportunity to compose in school, with help during the actual writing process in clarifying ideas, in choosing phrasing, and sometimes in dealing with mechanical problems. Writing outside the classroom, of course, should be encouraged and sometimes required.

7. Range of Assignments. Writing assignments should be individualized, adjusted to the age, interests, and abilities of the student. Particularly in the elementary grades, but also through high school and into college, the teacher should encourage writing from personal experience, sometimes developing classroom experiences to provide material for writing. The expository essay should not be the exclusive form of composition encouraged. Especially for students who have convinced themselves that composition must be boring, a chore to be avoided whenever possible, writing various kinds of narratives, vignettes, dialogues, fables, family folklore, parodies, and the like may create interest.

8. Alternate Techniques. Instruction in writing techniques and rhetorical strategies should be part of the writing course, adjusted to the age and need of the students and focused on positive advice, suggestions, information, and encouragement. Instruction can include discussion of various ways in which writing can achieve its ends--in units as brief as a word or two and as long as a book--, observations of procedures followed in existing prose, and constructive criticism of student writing.

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9. Composing. Since there is adequate subject matter for direct study of writing, courses or units of English courses dedicated to composition should not be converted to courses in literature or social problems, with compositions to be written on the side.

10. Usage. Usage is an aspect of rhetoric; learning to predict the social effects of different dialects or different linguistic constructions is part of learning how writing can achieve its purposes. Students should be provided with information that will allow them the largest possible body of alternatives from which to choose and will help them to choose wisely. They should know, for example, that dragged and drug are both used as past tense forms, but that some listeners will react to drug by considering it uneducated. Or students should learn that we was and we were are alternatives but that we was is not characteristic of a prestige dialect. Such information should be provided through positive instruction about how dialects develop and why variations occur--not through correction based on notions of right and wrong.

11. Dialects. No dialect should be presented as "right" or "pure" or "logical" or better than others. The student should be given an opportunity to learn a standard written English, but the teacher must resist the temptation to allow the cultivation of a standard written English to stifle self-expression or to overshadow emphasis on clear, forceful, interesting writing.

12. Grammar. The study of the structure and history of language, including English grammar, is a valuable asset to a liberal education and an important part of an English program. It should, however, be taught for its own sake, not as a substitute for composition and not with the pretense that it is taught only to improve writing.

13. Support for Composing. Various kinds of activities related to composition contribute to the student's ability to write--film making, debates, collecting material for notebooks, library investigation, dramatics, field trips, television and film viewing. The attractions of such activities--because of their novelty or because they seem to gain more immediate student interest--should not be allowed to supersede instruction in writing.

14. Talking and Writing. Students are influenced by mass media not only as consumers but also as producers. Children, for example, may find it easier to compose orally on tapes, without the labor of handwriting. The teacher can sometimes exploit this interest in oral composition as a step toward writing, but the importance of the written word remains, and practice in oral composition is not sufficient.

15. Audience. Although some writing may be intended to be private, writing implies an audience and students should be helped to use a voice appropriate to the interests, maturity, and ability of an audience. Furthermore, since young writers are especially concerned about response, their writing should be read by classmates as well as the teacher.

16. Grading. The mere assignment of grades is rarely an adequate way of encouraging and improving writing; whenever possible grades should be replaced by criticism or detailed evaluation. When grades are required, the teacher should avoid basing them primarily on negative considerations--for example, the number of misspelled words or sentence fragments.

17. Class size. Classes in writing should be limited to no more than twenty to facilitate frequent writing, reading of papers, and discussion of written work.

18. Objectives. Emphasis on instructional objectives or on accountability should not dictate the content of the course, particularly not to replace writing with attention to measurable skills--mechanics, for example. Teachers should retain responsibility for determining their objectives; demands for accountability should not interfere with independent thought among students.